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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR. JOINT STAFF
FOR LTGEN SELVA, JERUSALEM PASS AMB. HALE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2020
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: MORATORIUM: MOD SEEKING TO STRENGTHEN DETERRENCE

REF: ^

Classified By: DCM Luis G. Moreno for reasons 1.4 b/d

11. (U) On 25 February, Israel's Army Radio reported that the MOD plans to seek criminal proceedings against settlers who continue to build in spite of the moratorium. To do so, the MOD would hire lawyers for a period of several months to assist in the preparation of criminal files against such violators. Army Radio noted that the MOD has confirmed these details and added that to date Civil Administration (CivAd) inspectors had issued approximately 300 stop-work orders. (Note: Embassy contacts in the MOD were not immediately available for comment. End note)

12. (C) This latest development appears to be part of a growing effort in the MOD to increase deterrent pressure on settlers. In late January, Deputy Defense Minister, Matan Vilna'i, confirmed to the Knesset that at least 29 West Bank settlements had violated the moratorium (with multiple infractions in many of the communities), and added that CivAd teams had begun issuing demolition orders and that, at that time, the MOD was weighing further action. (Note: Vilna'i's Knesset memo was made public on 15 February. End note.) Then on 17 February, CivAd personnel demolished four cement foundations as well as construction on plots where ground preparation had begun in the settlement of Revava (approximately 4 km east of Ariel). Settler media, Arutz Sheva, reported that these were the first moratorium related demolitions, and LtCol Avi Shalev, head of CivAd's Foreign Relations Branch, suggested to Econoff on the same day that the frequency of such operations would likely increase in the near future.

13. (C) Comment: If fulfilled and maintained, such plans and operations would add much needed teeth to the GOI's moratorium order. CivAd confiscation of heavy construction vehicles and equipment in the initial days of moratorium enforcement deterred many contractors, but building by individual land owners has persisted absent more serious consequences. Ambassador has requested regular updates on moratorium enforcement from the Head of COGAT, Gen. Eitan Danguit, and we expect the first of such updates shortly. Meanwhile, we continue to engage our MOD and IDF interlocutors on their insistence that they cannot evacuate or conduct demolitions in illegal West Bank outposts due to manpower constraints created by their enforcement of the moratorium, underscoring that this weakens GOI credibility and contradicts Israel's Road Map obligations.

Cunningham